AVATAR

The Last Airbender

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER SIX: "The Blind Bandit"

Episode #206

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As Broadcast Draft
4.17.06

ACT ONE

EXT. EARTH KINGDOM TOWN OF GAOLING - DAY

This is the kind of town that the fancy Gan Jin would feel at home in. Aang (wearing his rice hat,) Katara, and Momo wait as Sokka contemplates purchasing a handsome satchel from a local vendor.

SOKKA
It's pricey but... I really do like it.

KATARA
Then you should get it. You deserve something nice.

SOKKA
I do, don't I? But... no. It's too expensive. I shouldn't.

KATARA
(impatient)
Alright, then don't.

SOKKA
You know what? I'm going to get it!

Sokka purchases the bag while Katara joins Aang. A PUSHY SALESMAN hands them some fliers.

PUSHY SALESMAN
Hey, you kids like Earthbending? You like throwing rocks? Then check out Master Yu's Earthbending Academy!

Aang looks at the flier, then flips it over.

AANG
Look! There's a coupon on the back. The first lesson is free.

KATARA
Who knows, this Master Yu could be the Earthbending teacher you've been looking for.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MASTER YU'S EARTHBENDING ACADEMY - COURTYARD - DAY

Aang (now wearing Earthbending training attire) stands in formation with a class of 8-year-olds, dressed similarly. Master Yu, a well-kept 40-something instructor runs the class like a drill instructor.

MASTER YU
Take your stances! Now strike as if you're punching through your opponent's head!

Aang's pint-sized partner punches a rock at Aang that sends him flying into a wall. Master Yu, always the salesman, approaches Aang, who is lying in a pile of rubble.

MASTER YU (cont'd)
So, are you ready to commit to more lessons? If you pay for the whole year in advance, I'll bump you up to the next belt.

EXT. MASTER YU'S EARTHBENDING ACADEMY - STREET - LATER

Aang comes out, rubbing his shoulder.

AANG
He's not the one.

Just then, two buff, TEENAGE STUDENTS come out of the academy.

STUDENT #1
I think the Boulder is going to win back the belt at Earth Rumble Six.

STUDENT #2
He's going to have to fight his way through the best Earthbenders in the world to even get a shot at the champ.

This discussion piques Aang's interest. Aang approaches the students, who glare at him.

AANG
Excuse me, but where is this Earthbending tournament exactly?

STUDENT #1
It's on the island of Nunya... Nunya business!

The two students LAUGH and continue on their way. We reveal Sokka has been laughing too.

SOKKA
I gotta remember that one.

KATARA
I'll take care of this.
(flirting)
Hey strong guys! Wait up!

She runs after the students, following them around the corner.

ANGLE ON: Aang and Sokka. Sokka looks at his newly purchased bag.

SOKKA
What was I thinking? I don't need a new bag. Why did you let me buy this?

Aang looks baffled. Momo looks at the bag, admiringly, then hops in, clearly pleased. Katara returns, smiling.

KATARA
You ready to find an Earthbending teacher? Because we're going to Earth Rumble Six!

AANG
How'd you get them to tell you?

KATARA
(coy)
Oh... a girl has her ways.

We reveal that the students are all stuck to each other, their arms encased in ice.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTABLISHING - OUTSKIRTS OF GAOLING - NIGHT

The kids arrive at a wooded area on the outskirts of town. There is a large rock formation, which serves as the entrance to the underground tournament. The kids walk down the stairs into...

INT. EARTHBENDING TOURNAMENT ARENA - CONTINUOUS

The kids enter an underground arena lit by glowing crystals -- a huge cavern with seats in the round that look down at a ring with a recessed pit that surrounds it. This is the Avatar version of a WWE event -- cheering crowds, fighters trash-talking each other, etc. The stands are full, but miraculously, the kids find a seat in the front row.

AANG
Hey, front row seats! I wonder why no one else is sitting here?

The ground begins to RUMBLE. A funnel of rock shoots up from the middle of the ring. A rock flies into the stands, smashing the seat next to the kids.

SOKKA
Guess that’s why.

The dust settles, revealing a buff, 50-year-old ring announcer, XIN FU (PRON: shin-FOO) in a dramatic Earthbending stance. The crowd CHEERS.

XIN FU
(to the crowd)
Welcome to Earth Rumble Six. I am your host, Xin Fu.

The crowds CHEERS again. In the stands, Katara looks bored. Momo watches the show from Sokka’s bag.

KATARA
(SIGHS) This is just gonna be a bunch of guys chucking rocks at each other, isn’t it.

SOKKA
(with a smile)
That’s what I paid for.

Back in the ring, Xin Fu gets the tournament underway.

XIN FU
The rules are simple -- just knock the other guy out of the ring and you win!

The crowd CHEERS wildly, as does Sokka.

SNAP OUT TO:

INT. ARENA - ROUND #1 - THE BIG BAD HIPPO VS. THE BOULDER

XIN FU
Round one! The Boulder versus...
The BIG, BAD, HIPPOOOO!

Two fighters stand on opposite sides of the ring: THE BIG BAD HIPPO and THE BOULDER. The Boulder is a big, muscular guy who wears the studded arm, leg, and waist belts, but no shirt. He is an awesome fighter with a cool badger-mole tattoo on his arm.

THE BOULDER
Listen up, Hippo! You may be big but you ain't bad. The Boulder's gonna win this "in a landslide."

The Hippo is a huge, sumo wrestler-sized guy, even larger than the Boulder. The Hippo stomps his feet like a sumo wrestler and the entire ring shakes.

BIG BAD HIPPO
Hippo... MAD!

Momo hides in the bag.

The Boulder hurls rocks at the Hippo, who just smashes them into dust. Then, the Hippo eats a handful of rocks, chews them up, and spits them at The Boulder, pelting him mercilessly. Then, the Hippo moves his enormous mass from side to side, literally rocking the ring and throwing The Boulder off balance.

XIN FU
Unbelievable, ladies and gentlemen!
The Hippo is "Rocking the Boat!"

The Boulder is about to fall out of the ring, but at the last moment, he Earthbends a ledge to catch himself. He uses the ledge to shove himself back into the ring. (NOTE: only his body falls out of the ring -- his feet are still inside.) The Boulder counters, sending strikes that kick up the earth under the Hippo's feet, knocking him off balance. Then, in a feat of amazing strength, the Boulder picks up the Hippo with a mound of earth and drops him outside the circle. The Hippo lands with a thunderous thud, shaking the arena. (Think Hulk Hogan lifting Andre the Giant in Wrestlemania III.)

XIN FU (cont'd)
The Boulder wins!

In the stands, Katara and Aang talk.

KATARA
How about the Boulder? He's got some good moves.

AANG
I don't know... Bumi said I need a teacher who listens to the earth -- he's just listening to his big muscles. What do you think, Sokka?

Reveal Sokka cheering like a rowdy wrestling fan.

SOKKA
(WILD LAUGHING AND CHEERING)

WHIP PAN TO:

INT. ARENA - SECOND ROUND - THE BOULDER VS. FIRE NATION MAN

XIN FU
Next match! The Boulder versus... Fire -- Nation -- MAN!

Reveal: FIRE NATION MAN . He is an Earthbender dressed up in fanciful Fire Nation clothes, waving a giant Fire Nation flag. The crowd and Sokka BOO.

FIRE NATION MAN
(heavy accent)
Please rise for Fire Nation national anthem.
(begins singing)
Fire Lord, my flame burns for thee--

CROWD AND SOKKA
(LOUD BOOS)

SOKKA
Go back to the Fire Nation!

FIRE NATION MAN
(SURPRISED REACTION)

Out of nowhere, Fire Nation Man is sucked into the ground up to his waist. The Boulder kicks up a column of rock and stands high in the air as if on a turn buckle.

FIRE NATION MAN (cont'd)
(cowering)
No... no, please!

The Boulder leaps off the rock and does an elbow drop that catapults Fire Nation Man out of the ring and into the stands. The roar of the crowd is deafening. Sokka CHEERS wildly.

SOKKA
Yeah! The Boulder knows how to put the hurt in the dirt!

INT. ARENA - VARIOUS MATCHES - MONTAGE

We see the Boulder knocking his various opponents out of the ring: THE GECKO (a smaller, masked fighter who can stick to walls); THE GOPHER (a guy who tunnels up from the earth); THE HEADHUNTER (a crazy-looking guy with long hair and a painted face -- like “the Ultimate Warrior”); and/or any other funny fighters that come to mind.

The arena goes dark.

XIN FU
Now, the moment you’ve all been waiting for -- The Boulder versus your champion, The Blind Bandit!

A single light shines on the ring, into which steps a tiny, 12-year-old girl in rugged Earthbending attire. She holds a giant, oversized championship belt over her head. The crowd CHEERS. There is a close-up shot where we see the bandit’s cloudy eyes. Katara and Aang give each other a surprised look -- they’re both thinking the same thing.

KATARA
She can’t really be blind. It’s just part of her character, right?

AANG
I think she is.

SOKKA
I think she is going down!

ANGLE ON: The ring.

THE BOULDER
The Boulder feels conflicted about fighting a young, blind girl!

THE BLIND BANDIT
Sounds to me like you’re scared, Boulder!

THE BOULDER
The Boulder’s over his conflicted feelings, and now he’s ready to bury you in a rock-a-lanche!

THE BLIND BANDIT
Whenever you’re ready, “The Pebble.” (LAUGHING)

The Bandit’s laugh echoes in Aang’s head --

FLASHBACK

We see Aang’s swamp vision from 2.04. He’s chasing after the girl in the fancy dress on the flying pig. Only this time when Aang catches up to her, he actually sees that the Blind Bandit is the girl in the fancy dress.

BACK TO SCENE

THE BOULDER
It’s on!

What follows is a STYLIZED, SLOW-MOTION SEQUENCE that depicts the fight as seen from The Bandit’s P.O.V. It is one moment drawn out over time and it should show how she is able to listen to the earth to find and defeat her opponent.

The Bandit blocks out the noise of the crowd and focuses on her opponent, listening to the earth beneath her feet. As the two fighters face off, we see various shots of The Bandit, listening to the earth, intercut with various shots of the Boulder, preparing to strike. (There should be some extreme C.U. shots mixed in -- ie. a shot of the Bandit’s cloudy eyes; the Bandit’s toes gripping the ground; beads of sweat dripping off of the Boulder and making huge splash sounds that the Bandit hears; the Boulder sliding his foot across the dirt, making a huge scraping noise that The Bandit hears -- that kind of stuff.)

After all the build up, the Boulder just takes one step, and the Bandit is able to “hear” it and anticipate the attack. BACK TO NORMAL SPEED: The Bandit shifts her weight, making a ripple-like wave in the earth. The wave bucks the Boulder into the air, breaking his root. As he is about to hit the ground, she sends another earth attack that knocks him out of the ring!

XIN FU
Your winner -- and still the champion -- The Blind Bandit!

SOKKA
(devastated)
Nooooo!!

KATARA
How did she do that?

AANG
(realizing)
She waited... and listened.

The Blind Bandit stands in the middle of the ring holding up her Championship belt. Xin Fu holds up a sack of money.

XIN FU
To make things a little more interesting -- I'm offering up this sack of gold pieces to anyone who can defeat The Blind Bandit!

The crowd is hushed.

XIN FU (cont'd)
What?! No one dares to face her?

AANG (O.S.)
I will!

Aang jumps down into the ring. The crowd ROARS.

SOKKA
Go Aang! Avenge The Boulder!

In the ring, the Blind Bandit trash-talks Aang loud enough for the crowd to hear. Aang speaks in normal tones to the Bandit.

THE BLIND BANDIT
Do people really want to see <u>two</u> little girls fighting out here?

CROWD
("You got burned")
Oooooo...

AANG
Oh, I don't really want to fight you, I want to talk to you.

The crowd BOOS, including Sokka.

SOKKA
Boo! No talking!

KATARA
Don’t boo at him!

Katara hits him on the shoulder. Back in the ring, the Bandit sends a wave move at Aang, which Aang avoids by jumping into the air. (NOTE: Aang shouldn’t do any obvious Airbending moves that would give him away.) The Bandit looks confused for a moment, but as soon as Aang lands, she senses him.

THE BLIND BANDIT
Somebody’s a little light on his feet. What’s your fighting name, “The Fancy Dancer?”

She sends another attack, which Aang deftly avoids. He skitters across the ring, light on his feet, making it difficult for The Bandit to locate him.

THE BLIND BANDIT (cont’d)
(sotto)
Where’d you go...?

AANG
Please, wait--

THE BLIND BANDIT
There you are.

She strikes again. Aang avoids it, but this time he attacks back with an Airbending strike that kicks up a lot of dust. The strike knocks The Bandit out of the ring. She, and everyone else in the arena, is stunned for a moment (including Xin Fu and The Boulder.) Then the crowd erupts into CHEERS. Aang runs up to The Bandit.

AANG
Please listen, I need an Earthbending teacher and I think it’s supposed to be you.

THE BLIND BANDIT
Whoever you are, just leave me alone!

The Blind Bandit suddenly Earthbends through the wall to an adjacent hallway. Aang tries to follow but the wall closes back up, stopping him.

AANG
Wait!

Sokka and Katara run up. Sokka grabs the sack of money and championship belt from Xin Fu who hands them over reluctantly, narrowing his eyes suspiciously.

SOKKA
Way to go, Champ!

Aang is not in a celebrating mood, he is already wondering how he is going to find the Blind Bandit.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. EARTH KINGDOM TOWN OF GAOLING - MORNING

The kids walk down the street toward Master Yu's academy. Sokka wears the championship belt and holds his new bag.

SOKKA
I got to admit, now I'm really glad I bought this bag -- it matches the belt perfectly.

KATARA
(humoring him)
That is a big relief.

AANG
If we want to find the Blind Bandit, the Earthbending academy is a good place to start.

They enter...

INT. MASTER YU'S EARTHBENDING ACADEMY - CONTINUOUS

The students from yesterday are warming up. As soon as they see Katara, they roll their eyes.

STUDENT #1
Oh great, you again.

Katara does a quick fake LUNGE, and the students FLINCH.

KATARA
Yeah, I didn't think so.

Sokka nods approvingly at Katara.

SOKKA
Nicely done.

STUDENT #2
(recognizing Aang)
Hey, you're the kid who beat The Blind Bandit!

AANG
We need to talk to her. Do you guys know where she lives?

STUDENT #1
The Blind Bandit is a mystery. She shows up to fight, then disappears.

KATARA
(to Aang)
Let me handle this.
(intimidating)
You’re not telling us everything.

STUDENT #2
I swear, it’s true. No one knows where she goes or who she really is.

AANG
(realizing)
That’s because we’re asking about the wrong person. In my vision, I saw a girl in a white dress with a pet flying boar.
(to the students)
Know anybody like that?

STUDENT #1
Well, a flying boar is the symbol of the Beifong family. They’re the richest people in town, probably the whole world.

STUDENT #2
Yeah, but they don’t have a daughter.

AANG
(undeterred)
Flying boar is good enough for me. Let’s check it out!

As the kids exit, one of the students MURMURS.

STUDENT #1
(under his breath)
Yeah, you better leave.

Katara whips around and delivers one last parting shot, pointing menacingly.

KATARA
Hey -- I got my eye on you.

The students straighten up, not wanting any trouble. Sokka nods and also points.

SOKKA
Water Tribe.

INT. EARTHBENDING ARENA - DAY

The Boulder stands before Xin Fu.

THE BOULDER
I'm telling you, The Boulder was standing right there. I saw the kid strike, but there was no Earthbending, nothing made contact -- The Blind Bandit just fell out of the ring. She must have took a dive and split the money with the kid.

Xin Fu slams his fist against the wall, splitting off a chunk of rock that lands on his foot.

XIN FU
(SCREAMS IN PAIN AND AGGRAVATION)
Nobody cheats Xin Fu!

EXT. BEIFONG ESTATES - DAY

A large gate and tall, stone wall surround the palatial, well-landscaped estate. Several guards stand at the gate. The kids watch from their hiding place, a safe distance away. There is a giant seal above the gate depicting a flying boar.

AANG
(re: gate)
That's the flying boar from my vision. Come on.

The kids sneak off.

EXT. BEIFONG ESTATES - SIDE WALL - MOMENTS LATER

The kids sneak over the wall and through the lush gardens, staying hidden behind the tall hedges. Suddenly, the ground beneath them rises and the kids are launched into the air. They land in some bushes.

AANG/KATARA/SOKKA
(SURPRISED YELL)

Then, the Blind Bandit (dressed in fancy clothes) walks out from behind one of the hedges.

THE BLIND BANDIT
What are you doing here, twinkle toes?

AANG
How’d you know it was me?

SOKKA
Don’t answer to twinkle toes! It’s not manly.

KATARA
You’re the one whose bag matches his belt.

THE BLIND BANDIT
How did you find me?

AANG
Well, a crazy king told me I had to find an Earthbender who listens to the earth -- and then I had a vision in a magic swamp and --

KATARA
(interrupting)
What Aang is trying to say is, he’s the Avatar and if he doesn’t master Earthbending soon, he won’t be able to defeat the Fire Lord.

THE BLIND BANDIT
Not my problem. Now get out of here, or I’ll call the guards.

SOKKA
Look, we all have to do our part to win this war -- and yours is to teach Aang Earthbending.

A beat as the Blind Bandit considers this.

THE BLIND BANDIT
(scared and helpless sounding)
Guards! Guards, help!

Aang, Katara, and Sokka have no choice -- they run off, back over the wall. A moment later, the guards arrive.

GUARD #1
Toph (PRON: toff), what happened?

(ACTING NOTE: When the Blind Bandit acts like Toph, she should sound more innocent and helpless -- this is an act she puts on, but it should sound genuine.)

TOPH
I thought I heard someone... I got scared.

GUARD #1
You know your father doesn't want you wandering the grounds without supervision, Toph.

The guards escort her toward the house. Aang gets a scheming smile across his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEIFONG ESTATES - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

LAO BEIFONG, a self-important 40-year-old, and his wife, POPPY, sit in the richly appointed living room with Master Yu and Toph.

LAO
I'm pleased to hear that Toph's private lessons are going well... but I want to be sure she's not trying anything too dangerous.

MASTER YU
Absolutely not. I'm keeping her at the beginner's level -- basic forms and breathing exercises only.

LAO
Very good.

Lao's SERVANT enters.

SERVANT
Excuse me, sir. But you have a visitor.

LAO
Who thinks they are so important that they can just come to my home unannounced?

SERVANT
Uh... the Avatar, sir.

Everyone looks at each other, a bit surprised. Toph looks annoyed.

INT. BEIFONG ESTATES - DINING ROOM - LATER

The Beifong family, Master Yu, and the kids are all at dinner, sitting at a long dining table. This is a meal fit for a king with fancy plates and chopsticks -- it's by far the fanciest dinner that Sokka and Katara have ever attended. Momo is there too. The servant places soup in front of everyone, serving Toph last.

LAO
(to servant)
Blow on it. It's too hot for her.

AANG
Allow me.

Aang does a little Airbending move that cools off the soup. Everyone OOHS and AAHS, and does little polite GOLF CLAPS.

POPPY
Avatar Aang, it's an honor to have you visit us.

LAO
In your opinion, how much longer do you think the war will last?

AANG
I'd like to defeat the Fire Lord by the end of summer, but I can't do that without finding an Earthbending teacher first.

Aang pointedly directs this last comment at Toph.

LAO
Well, Master Yu is the finest teacher in the land. He's been teaching Toph since she was little.

AANG
Then she must be a great Earthbender -- probably good enough to teach someone else -- ow!

Toph kicks Aang under the table with Earthbending to get him to shut up. Aang glares at her. Toph maintains her innocent composure.

MASTER YU
Toph is still learning the basics.

LAO
Yes, and sadly, because of her blindness, I don't think she will ever become a true master.

Aang, Katara, and Sokka all give each other a look -- Lao has no idea what his daughter can really do.

AANG
Oh, I'm sure she's better than you think she is -- hey!

This time, Toph does an Earthbending move that causes Aang's soup to pop in the air and spill all over him. Aang does an Airbending move back, spilling Toph's soup all over her.

TOPH
What's your problem?

Toph does an Earthbending move that shoves Aang across the room and into the wall.

AANG
What's <u>your</u> problem?

Aang Airbends back at her, knocking her away from the table, and blowing bowls of food all over the dinner guests. Toph Earthbends various objects at Aang who dodges some and Airbends others back at her. Dinner has become an all out food fight.

Toph and Aang do final moves that knock them both on their butts. They look around at the destruction they've caused -- broken bowls, food everywhere, etc. The dining room is a complete mess.

POPPY
Shall we move to the living room for dessert, then?

INT. BEIFONG ESTATES - LUXURIOUS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aang, Katara, and Sokka are all getting ready for bed. Sokka polishes the belt. Appa is floating outside, his face takes up the whole window. Aang pats him on the nose.

AANG
Goodnight, buddy.

Toph enters. Surprised, Aang flinches and hops into an Airbending stance.

TOPH
Relax. Look, I'm sorry about dinner. Let's call a truce, okay?

EXT. BEIFONG ESTATES - GARDENS - MOMENTS LATER

Aang and Toph walk through the gardens. It's a beautiful, starry night.

TOPH
Even though I was born blind, I've never had a problem seeing. I see with Earthbending. It's kind of like seeing with my feet. I feel the vibrations in the Earth, and I can see where everything is -- you, that tree, even those ants.

We see some ants crawling into their ant hill.

AANG
That's amazing.

TOPH
My parents don't understand. They've always treated me like I was helpless.

AANG
Is that why you became the Blind Bandit?

TOPH
Yeah.

AANG
Then why stay here, where you're not happy?

TOPH
They're my parents. Where else am I supposed to go?

AANG
You could come with us.

TOPH
Yeah, you guys get to go wherever you want -- no one telling you what to do. That's the life.
(beat)
It's just not my life.

Toph tilts her head. She senses something.

TOPH (cont'd)
We're being ambushed!

Nothing happens, Aang looks around.

She grabs him.

But it's too late. There is a rumble, and from all directions, the fighters from the earlier matches Earthbend their way out of the ground, surrounding Toph and Aang. Xin Fu steps forward.

XIN FU
I think you kids owe me some money.

The Hippo raises both hands into a fist.

He swings his fists down, smashing the ground. Rocks fill the frame.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. BEIFONG ESTATES - GARDENS - NIGHT

Sokka, Katara, Lao, Poppy, and Master Yu are all there. They look at the rubble and overturned earth that was once the gardens.

SOKKA
Whoever took Aang and Toph left this.

He holds up a small scroll. Katara takes it and reads.

KATARA
(reading)
If you ever want to see your daughter again, bring 500 gold pieces to the arena. It's signed Xin Fu and the Boulder.

Sokka takes the scroll from Katara and looks at it.

SOKKA
I can't believe it...
(then, happy)
I have the Boulder's autograph!

Lao approaches Master Yu.

LAO
Master Yu, I need you to help me get my daughter back.

KATARA
We're going with you.

POPPY
(upset)
Poor Toph, she must be so scared...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. EARTHBENDING ARENA - THAT MOMENT

Aang and Toph are trapped in metal cages hanging from the arena ceiling. Toph is yelling at Xin Fu and the Boulder.

TOPH
You think you're tough?! Why don't you come up here so I can smack that grin off your face!

XIN FU
I’m not smiling.

LAO (O.S.)
Toph!

Reveal Katara, Sokka, Lao, and Master Yu enter the ring. Sokka holds up the sack of prize money.

SOKKA
Here’s your money, now let them go.

He places the money on the ground. Master Yu does an arrow kick that sends the bag shooting across the ring to Xin Fu. The Boulder lowers Toph’s cage and releases her. She runs over to her dad and he hugs her. Xin Fu opens the bag of gold.

KATARA
What about Aang?

Xin Fu unfurls a wanted poster of Aang.

XIN FU
I think the Fire Nation will pay a hefty price for the Avatar. Now get out of my ring.

Master Yu and Lao usher Toph toward the exit. But Katara and Sokka stand their ground. The various fighters emerge from backstage and threateningly advance. They are outnumbered.

AANG
Go. I’ll be okay.

Katara and Sokka reluctantly leave...

INT. EARTHBENDING ARENA - HALLWAY UNDER STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Lao holds his daughter’s hand and leads her away. Katara and Sokka catch up with them.

KATARA
Toph, there’s too many of them. We need an Earthbender. We need you.

LAO
My daughter is blind. She is blind and tiny and helpless and fragile. She cannot help you.

Toph stops and pulls her hand away from her father.

TOPH
Yes, I can.

She leaves her father’s side and joins Katara and Sokka. They go back into...

INT. EARTHBENDING ARENA - CONTINUOUS

Aang is still trapped in his cage. Xin Fu, the Boulder, the Hippo, the Fire Nation Man, the Gecko, the Gopher, and the Headhunter are all there. The Hippo and the Boulder are carrying Aang’s cage toward the arena exit, when suddenly a wall of rock blocks the archway. They turn to see Toph, Katara, and Sokka standing together. The trash talk begins.

TOPH
Let him go! I beat you all before, and I’ll do it again!

THE BOULDER
The Boulder takes issue with that comment!

The fighters, including Xin Fu, advance on the kids. It’s seven against three. Sokka and Katara start to rush forward, but Toph puts her arm up to stop them.

TOPH
Wait.

Toph listens to opponents approaching -- she hears where they are, and then strikes out at all of them in quick succession. She knocks everyone off balance for a moment.

TOPH (cont’d)
They’re mine!

With an opportunity opened, the Katara and Toph rush the other fighters, while Sokka goes to free Aang. He smashes the lock with a rock but it won’t break.

AANG
Hit it harder!

SOKKA
I’m trying!

Aang looks over at the other fighters and sees the Hippo -- he gets an idea.

The Hippo comes charging toward Aang and Sokka with his arms raised. Sokka dives out of the way as the Hippo smashes the cage into pieces. Aang leaps up and over the Hippo’s head.

When he lands, he forms an Air dome to pick up the Hippo -- Aang GRUNTS, exerting all his strength. He throws the Hippo into the stands, knocking him out.

Aang and Sokka join Katara and Toph in taking on the other fighters. It's the Avatar version of a royal rumble where everyone is in the ring at once and there are seperate pockets of fighting:

Katara takes on Fire Nation Man, who uses sandbending to fight -- a more fluid version of Earthbending.

Sokka takes on the Gopher who keeps popping up out of the ground in various places. Sokka tries to hit him with his club like whack-a-mole.

Aang takes on the Gecko, who uses his whole body as a weapon -- he can stick to rocks and swing around them to propel rocks (think an Earthbending version of Rey Mysterio.) Their fight can have a more vertical element to it.

Toph takes on Xin Fu, the Boulder, and the Headhunter -- we see more examples of how she is able to anticipate her opponents' moves. She fights three Earthbenders at once, deflecting their attacks and striking back in an awesome display of Earthbending -- it's clear that she can take care of herself.

From the safety of the stands, Lao and Master Yu watch Toph fight. Toph knocks the Headhunter into a nearby wall.

MASTER YU
I never knew -- your daughter is amazing!

Lao looks at Master Yu as if considering what he's just said, and then resumes watching the fight. The kids defeat the last of the bad guys, knocking them out or otherwise incapacitating them.

MASTER YU (cont'd)
She's the greatest Earthbender I've ever seen.

Off of Lao's contemplative look...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEIFONG ESTATES - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Everyone has returned to the Beifong estates. Toph comes clean to her father.

TOPH
Dad, I know it’s probably hard for you to see me this way, but the obedient little helpless blind girl that you think I am just isn’t me. I love fighting -- I love being an Earthbender. And I’m really, really good at it!
(beat)
I know I kept my life secret from you, but you were keeping me secret from the whole world! You were doing it to protect me. But I’m twelve years old and I’ve never had a real friend.
(beat)
So now that you see who I really am, I hope it doesn’t change the way you feel about me...

LAO
(warm)
Of course it doesn’t change the way I feel about you, Toph. It’s made me realize something...

TOPH
(hopeful)
It has?

LAO
Yes. I’ve let you have far too much freedom. From now on you will be cared for and guarded 24 hours a day.

TOPH
But Dad--

POPPY
We’re doing this for your own good, Toph.

Lao motions to the guards.

LAO
Please escort the Avatar and his friends out. They are no longer welcome here.

The guards escort Aang, Katara, and Sokka toward the door. Aang looks back at Toph.

AANG
I’m sorry, Toph.

TOPH
I’m sorry too. Goodbye, Aang.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING ESTATES - NIGHT

The kids pack up Appa, getting ready to leave. Aang sits by himself, looking off toward the estates. Katara puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

KATARA
Don’t worry, we’ll find you a teacher. There are plenty of amazing Earthbenders out there.

AANG
Not like her.

EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING ESTATES - SAME TIME

Aang jumps up onto Appa’s head and grabs the reins. He looks back at the estates one more time -- and sees Toph running toward him over the ridge.

AANG
Toph! What are you doing here?

TOPH
My dad changed his mind. He said I was free to travel the world.

Katara and Sokka give each other a look -- they know she’s probably not telling the truth.

SOKKA
Well, we better get out of here before your dad changes his mind again.

TOPH
Good idea.

AANG
You’re going to be a great teacher, Toph.

TOPH
Speaking of which, I want to show you something.

AANG
Okay.

Aang floats gently to the ground and the moment his foot touches down, Toph sends a wave of Earth that send him flying backwards into a tree.

TOPH
Now we're even. I'll take the belt back.

Sokka tosses her the belt -- but Toph is totally unaware, and it CLOCKS her in the head. She goes down.

TOPH (cont'd)
("Ow" or "Oof")

SOKKA
Sorry.

Katara shakes her head.

INT. BEIFONG ESTATE - LIVING ROOM

Lao addresses Xin Fu and Master Yu.

LAO
I know you two are very different, but I believe you have a common interest...

He opens a large chest full of SHINY COINS in front of them. Xin Fu and Master Yu look at each other a little uneasily, then look down at the money.

LAO (cont'd)
The Avatar has kidnapped my daughter. I want you to do whatever it takes to bring her home.

END ACT THREE